

On the Go

Spring Training is a Home Run for Family Fun

Sunshine, scenery and scores of activities make Scottsdale and Phoenix the place to play.

On the heels of the Super Bowl and the Phoenix Open, the Valley of the Sun is ready to welcome millions of visitors for Spring Training. If you are lucky enough to score tickets to the Giants, A's or 13 other MLB teams playing in the Cactus League you will have a blast. But the fun doesn't end at the bottom of the ninth — the area is teeming with activities for kids of all ages.

The fun starts flying into Phoenix where you see how the city is built around jaw-dropping rock formations, championship golf courses and baseball diamonds. So before or after you're cheering from the bleachers, check out some of the areas most popular family attractions.

Children's Museum of Phoenix is delightful for children of all ages. From hands-on art activities and climbing block mania to playing chef in the child-sized café to driving a pickle car around a noodle forest, parents will have almost as much fun as their kids.

The museum is located at 215 N. Seventh St., Phoenix, AZ 85034 (602-253-0501, www.childrensmuseumofphoenix.org).

You can't beat Scottsdale's springtime sunshine, and **McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park** is the perfect place to blow off some steam. Located in the heart of Scottsdale, this park is a favorite for visitors and locals alike. For just \$2 take a ride on the open-topped Paradise and Pacific Railroad or enjoy a twirl on the antique carousel. There are a variety of shops and fascinating museums right on site along with spacious playgrounds and picnic areas. The park is located at 7301 E. Indian Bend Road, Scottsdale, AZ 85250 (480-312-2312, www.therailroadpark.com).

The Valley is steeped in history and the **Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community** is a sovereign tribe located a stone's throw away from the Arizona Diamondback's Salt River Stadium. This Indian Community is comprised of two Native American tribes and their land encompasses 52,600 acres with 19,000 held as a natural preserve. Located on this land is Butterfly Wonderland, one of the newest and most popular attractions in the Valley. Your family can stroll

around a magnificent, lush rainforest environment that houses the largest butterfly pavilion in North America. Don't be surprised if a butterfly or two lands right on your shoulder. But if butterflies aren't manly enough for your boys, they can get up close and personal with the Live Ant Colony, Honey Bee Extravaganza or the Touch Tanks in the Rivers of the Amazon Aquatic Life. Butterfly World is located at 9500 E. Via de Ventura, Scottsdale, AZ 85256 (480-800-3000, www.butterflywonderland.com).

It might be baseball season, but let's not forget about lions and tigers and bears! **The Wildlife World Zoo, Aquarium & Safari Park** offers Arizona's largest collection of wild species and provides more fun than a barrel of monkeys. Take a ride on the African Safari Train, Australian Boat Ride or Skyride to visit the Baby Animal Nursery, Giraffe Feeding Station, Tropics of the World Reptiles and Safari Park Cheetahs. It's an action-packed day for everyone in your family. Located in the West Valley, the Wildlife World Zoo, Aquarium & Safari Park is located at 16501 W. Northern Avenue, Litchfield Park, AZ 85340 (623-935-9453, www.wildlifeworld.com).

No worries, we haven't forgotten about your teenagers. They won't have time to look down at their cell phones because they will be too engrossed in the The MIM, as it is affectionately known, is arguably the Number One attraction in Phoenix. With more than 360 exhibits representing every nation on earth it is mind-boggling how much there is to take in. From African drums dating back centuries to hand-written notes by Taylor Swift the MIM has so much to offer that it should be the first note on everyone's list. **The Musical Instrument Museum** is located at 4725 E. Mayo Boulevard, Phoenix, AZ 85050 (480-478-6000, <http://mim.org>).

Enjoy the game, enjoy the weather and start planning now; when it comes to family fun, the Phoenix and Scottsdale are really hits one out of the park.

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Measles, Strangers, Bullies & Summer Camp - A Family Discussion

Believe it or not, it's already time to start planning our children's summer camp schedules. Each year in our household this stimulates furious, anxious planning and discussion. I mean, how many activities do these youngsters really need? Back in our day we were sent out to play for the summer and told to come back in August! Okay, not really but you probably feel the same way.

With new times come new challenges. This year our family discussion fell directly on the latest 'hot button' topic and our first important topic to consider when choosing summer camps: Communicable diseases - or more specifically, the measles. Much has been said in the media about pockets of un-immunized in Northern California and not surprisingly there has been an incredible social media frenzy surrounding the topic. People seem to be turning on their neighbors with pitchforks over this so I'm definitely not going to get into that discussion here. My only thought is: each side is absolutely sure that they are right. Unless we can all step back and remove the emotional charge from the topic, we'll never discuss the actual facts behind the science. No matter what your stance is, remember to be respectful - I've read about and personally witnessed grown adults acting like children, resorting to name calling and flat out obstinate behavior. Remember - our little ones are watching and mimicking. Measles is normally a mild, self-limiting disease that runs its course without long-standing effect. Two facts to put your mind at ease: we still have an 85-90% vaccination rate. Secondly, the risk of death amongst infected persons is 0.2% and these are mostly immunocompromised and/or malnourished individuals. (Atkinson, William - 2011. Epidemiology and Prevention of Vaccine-Preventable Diseases.)

So what do we do to protect our little ones from diseases like measles? Make sure that they have optimally functioning immune systems - easy right? Start with getting proper sleep. Consistent bed time is often the largest barrier to successful sleep patterns, especially trying to get into that all-important REM cycle. After all, this is when the body most efficiently heals and replenishes. Next on the list, not surprisingly, is great - not good - great nutrition. Yes, the kids need to eat something green! If you're having a hard time, consider a delicious green smoothie. Our kids actually ask us for this on a regular basis. Next, please teach your kids to use their 'cough pocket' - coughing into the crook of the elbow instead of into hands or worse into the air for all to share - is one of the best and most effective methods for stopping spread of viral particulate. And lastly, washing hands is still the most effective method to stop spread of airborne communicable disease. The CDC recommends washing hands, with soap and water for at least 30 seconds many times per day. Also be aware that hand sanitizers are generally less effective than proper hand washing techniques.

The second concern our family discussed this year was personal safety. Yes, 'stranger danger' could not be more serious these days. Let's face it, sending our kids off to a new, unfamiliar place with new unfamiliar routines, instructors and friends can be quite disorientating - to parents and kids alike. Have your routine down. Be sure your child knows when and where things are happening. Go over it each morning and drill it until they can repeat it back to you. Develop a unique family password or safe word in case you have to send someone else to pick them up or in worse-case scenario, some unauthorized person tries to. Make sure your kids know to ask them for the password and to run to safety if the person hesitates. This may seem extreme, but it could make all the difference in the world. Secondly, be sure that the camp utilizes the buddy system for an additional layer of safety. This is especially useful for youngsters using the bathroom - this is simply a matter of safety in numbers. By all means begin having the talk about human anatomy and personal and private areas of the body. Starting this dialogue doesn't need to be daunting - as they are learning about the body in school, just point out private areas and be sure they know to tell you about any unauthorized actions. As always, having open lines of communication with your children is of utmost importance and remember communication is 60% body language.

The third topic of concern for us this year was that of bullying. Here again communication is extremely important and having a good working relationship with camp counsellors and staff can really help. Have them bring up to you any issues quickly as being on the look-out for signs of trouble early is of utmost importance. Early detection is key. Again, have conversations with your child about this and be acutely aware of their body language. Bullying situations can accelerate quickly, and end in dire circumstances for some, so please have a plan of attack and don't hesitate to remove your child from the camp or class if you're not seeing the behavior change.

Lastly, let's remember that camps can be a fantastic source of fun and education for our children, but let's try to not let this be a stressful endeavor for them. You'll be able to tell if they are not enjoying themselves and if so, change it up. After all, we survived those summers alone in the wilderness - it only made us stronger!

From my family to yours - be well.

Dr. Chris Pieda DC



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